

LESSON 3

In this lesson we learn the use of the Arabic definite article «al» which corresponds to the English “the”. When the definite article «al» is prefixed to a noun naturally the indefinite article (-n) is dropped, e.g.

بَيْتٌ	⇒	الْبَيْتُ
<i>baitu-n</i>	⇒	<i>al-baitu</i>

Arabic has 28 letters. Of these 14 are called Solar Letters, and the other 14 are called Lunar Letters. In the articulation of the Solar Letters the tip or the blade of the tongue is involved as in t, n, r, s, etc. The tip or the blade of the tongue does not play any part in the articulation of the Lunar Letters as in b, w, m, k, etc.

When «al» is prefixed to a noun beginning with a Solar Letter the «l» of «al» is assimilated to the Solar Letter, e.g. al-shams (the sun) is pronounced *ash-shamsu*. No change takes place in writing (الشَّمْسُ). The assimilation is indicated by the shaddah on the first letter of the noun.

No such assimilation takes place with the Lunar Letters, e.g. al-qamaru (the moon) is pronounced *al-qamaru* (القَمَرُ).

Here are some more examples of the assimilation of the «l» of «al» to the Solar Letters:

- al-najmu becomes *an-najmu*
- al-rajulu becomes *ar-rajulu*
- al-dīku becomes *ad-dīku*
- al-samaku becomes *as-samaku*

See the table of Lunar and Solar Letters (page 19 of the Arabic book).

Note that the «a» of «al» is pronounced only when it is not preceded by another word. If it is preceded by a word it is dropped in pronunciation, though it remains in writing, e.g. *al-baitu*. Here the «a» is pronounced, but if it is preceded by «wa» meaning “and” the «a» is dropped and the phrase is pronounced *wa l-baitu* not *wa al-baitu*.

To indicate this omission in pronunciation this sign « َ » is placed above the hamzah:

وَالْبَيْتُ

The initial vowel (a, i, or u) which is omitted when preceded by a word is called **hamazatu l-wasl**.

The door is open.

البَابُ مَفْتُوحٌ .

The pen is broken.

القَلَمُ مَكْسُورٌ .

Note:

We have learnt that the tanwîn is the indefinite article, and it is to be translated as «a», e.g. **بَيْتٌ** a house. This does not apply to adjectives like **مَفْتُوحٌ** “open”, and **مَكْسُورٌ** “broken”.

Vocabulary

غَنِيٌّ	rich	x	فَقِيرٌ	poor
طَوِيلٌ	tall	x	قَصِيرٌ	short
بَارِدٌ	cold	x	حَارٌّ	hot
جَالِسٌ	sitting	x	وَاقِفٌ	standing
جَدِيدٌ	new	x	قَدِيمٌ	old
قَرِيبٌ	near	x	بَعِيدٌ	far away
نَظِيفٌ	clean	x	وَسِخٌ	dirty
صَغِيرٌ	small	x	كَبِيرٌ	big
خَفِيفٌ	light	x	ثَقِيلٌ	heavy
الْوَرَقُ	paper		الْمَاءُ	water
التِّفَاحُ	apple		جَمِيلٌ	beautiful
الدُّكَّانُ	shop		حُلُوٌّ	sweet
مَرِيضٌ	sick			